



Dialogue

Volume 19, No. 1
Winter 2005



Find out on page 7 why the young man on the left in this picture is ranked among the top 4% of Boy Scouts in America.

Consumer Spotlight

Double the Challenges, Double the Satisfaction

This is the last story in a yearlong series focusing on Early Start services. The Early Start program, administered in California through the regional centers, provides early intervention services such as speech, physical or occupational therapy to children under age three that have a significant delay in one or more developmental areas.

Identical twin boys, born five weeks early. While that's premature, it wouldn't necessarily mean that they would have serious problems. Unfortunately, these babies were what is called "discordant" twins, with a condition also known as twin-to-twin transfusion, meaning that before they were born, more nutrients from the placenta went to one, and as a result, the other baby had intrauterine growth retardation. The outcome was that baby Thomas was born weighing 5 pounds, 12 ounces, while his brother, Steven, weighed just 3 pounds, 4 ounces. Yet, paradoxically, it was Thomas who had more problems when first born.

Both were in the neonatal intensive care unit for about a month, but Steven really just needed to gain weight and learn to suck. His brother was in serious distress. Dependent upon a ventilator to breathe, he also had a heart problem and jaundice so severe that he required a blood transfusion.

After the boys went home, they were served through the county's Visiting Nurse Association High Risk

Infant Program, and the nurse referred their parents to the Regional Center. The twins' mom, Pat, wrote in her journal on May 6: "Today I had a visit from a social worker and a nurse from [RCOC]. They were so nice and seemed to really understand my concerns. For the first time in two months, I now know that there will be help for my boys." That brief entry reveals not only the fear and anxiety felt by that mother, but also her relief in discovering hope for her babies' future.

Thomas and Steven were made eligible for Early Start services through RCOC and initially received occupational therapy to improve their muscle tone and fine motor skills. At 20 months of age, they were not speaking at all, so they started speech therapy after receiving speech evaluations. By age three the boys' development was far enough along that they did not qualify for ongoing RCOC services. They did, however, transition to services from the school district, attending a special education class in preschool.



Shown here at 22 months of age, Thomas (left) and Steven received occupational and speech therapy through the Regional Center to help in their development.

See 'Twins,' page 10

New Session, New Legislators and New Bills

By Karen Chen, RCOC Board of Directors

Hello everyone!

I'm glad to be back in Southern California after completing an internship in Washington, D.C. with the

Executive Office of the President, Office of Management and Budget (OMB). I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to experience the development of budget, program, management, and regulatory policies at the federal level. I'd like to thank Tresa Oliveri for taking over as chair of the Legislative Committee in my absence.



New Legislative Session Starts

December 5, 2004 officially started a new two-year session of our state Legislature. Basically, that means that any pending bills that weren't passed by last August can't be carried over into the next legislative session for action, so they are removed from the bill file. If you'd like to learn about the legislative process, you can access a publication called "How a Bill Becomes Law" at www.leginfo.ca.gov/yourleg.html.

New Bills Introduced

Some new bills affecting people with developmental disabilities have already been introduced. Following is a brief summary of one of them.

AB 10 – "Inappropriate Placement of Disabled Persons"

Author: Assembly Member Lynn Daucher (R-Brea, 72nd District)

In order to ensure that people with disabilities are not unnecessarily institutionalized, this bill would require all acute care hospitals and skilled nursing facilities to adopt patient assessment procedures so that the facilities comply with the Supreme Court decision known as "Olmstead," that pertains to community placement of people with disabilities.

New Legislators Elected

Last November, the citizens of Orange County elected one new state senator and five freshman assembly members. The new senator is **John Campbell**, previously a two-term assembly member, so he's not new to Sacramento. He succeeded Senator Ross Johnson, who retired from office because of term limits. Senator Campbell's district includes all of coastal Orange County as well as Costa Mesa, Cypress, Fountain Valley, Irvine, La Palma, Los Alamitos, Rossmoor, and the majority of Westminster.

Following is key information about the newest assembly members for Orange County. "R" stands for Republican; "D" means Democrat.

Chuck Devore, R, Assembly District 70

District: Aliso Viejo, Irvine, Laguna Beach, Laguna Woods, Lake Forest, Newport Beach, and Tustin.

Biography: Executive in the aerospace and defense industry. Also serves as a major in the Army National Guard. Served as an Irvine City Commissioner from 1991 to 1996.

Bob Huff, R, Assembly District 60

District: La Habra Heights, Villa Park and portions of Anaheim, La Habra, Orange, and Yorba Linda, in addition



to cities in Los Angeles and San Bernardino Counties.

Biography: Occupation: Manager-owner of an independent commodity wholesale company. Has interest and experience in transportation issues; served as president of the Foothill Transit Executive Board.

Van Tran, R, Assembly District 68

District: Anaheim, Costa Mesa, Garden Grove, Fountain Valley, Newport Beach, Stanton, and Westminster.

Biography: Former member of RCOC's board of directors. Served on the Garden Grove City Council. Is the managing partner of Van Thai Tran & Associates law firm.

Thomas J. Umberg, D, Assembly District 69

District: All of Santa Ana; portions of Anaheim and Garden Grove.

Biography: Is a former member of the State Assembly. Served as deputy director of the White House National Drug Control Policy under President Clinton. Is an attorney and currently serves as a colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve.

Mimi Walters, R, Assembly District 73

District: Aliso Viejo, Dana Point, Laguna Hills, Laguna Niguel, Oceanside, San Clemente, and San Juan Capistrano.

Biography: Was an investment executive. Served as mayor of Laguna Niguel in 2000. Served on the boards of the American Cancer Society and the South Coast Medical Center Foundation.

Look for more information on proposed new laws and other issues in upcoming editions of *Dialogue*.



CEO's Corner

Governor's Proposed Budget for 2005-06 a Mixed Bag

By Bill Bowman, Chief Executive Officer

Propose: "To present for consideration or action."



On January 10 Governor Schwarzenegger released his

proposed budget for the 2005-06 fiscal year. It contains some interesting ideas – a couple which look positive, others that raise concerns, and some that aren't clear yet. One good thing said at the budget press conference by the governor's new finance director, Tom Campbell, was that programs for people with developmental disabilities are protected. It is yet to be seen how this statement will play out as the proposal moves through the process.

Deficit Remains

Still with us, though, is a multi-billion dollar deficit that needs to be addressed. The governor stressed that we need to fix the broken system and live within our means. He said his first concern is for children, but it is also important to take care of people with disabilities. He expressed determination to bring about reforms in the overall budget structure in order to avoid future deficits. Some year-to-year budget increases happen automatically because of earlier laws passed, triggering budget formulas that require the state to spend \$1.10 for every \$1.00 taken in.

Promising Developments

Two bright spots in the budget that pertain to people with developmental disabilities are the Agnews Develop-

mental Center closure plan and expansion of the "Independence Plus" grant. The development of the plan to close Agnews by 2007 has involved organizations from outside of California that offer fresh ideas for residential and work options for the individuals who will be moving from the institution to the community. That sets the stage for subsequent developmental center closures to take place smoothly with quality services and care provided according to individual needs.

The governor stressed the importance of taking care of people with disabilities.

Independence Plus is the name of the grant that has funded self-determination pilot projects at five regional centers over the past five years. The proposal is for the grant to be extended to an additional five regional centers in 2005-06, with a goal of having 9,000 people participating in the project in two years. At this point, we don't know which regional centers would be included. Self determination, also called self-directed services, allows people with developmental disabilities and their families to manage the public funds allocated to their services. They purchase their own supports according to the needs and goals written in their Individual Program Plans.

Continuing Concerns

The major challenge in the budget for regional centers is the continuation of freezes on rate increases for service providers and start-up funds to develop new resources. These measures were implemented two years ago to help contain costs, and they have been effective, but even the governor's proposed budget

acknowledges that rate freezes are not satisfactory long term savings solutions. Quality will suffer and options will become scarce as providers get forced out of business because of rising costs and insufficient rates of pay.

Other Areas of Concern

Areas of concern that don't affect regional center services directly yet, but will impact people with developmental disabilities include Supplemental Security Income (SSI), In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS), and Medi-Cal reform. The governor is proposing that the state not pass a federal cost of living increase to SSI recipients in 2006.

With IHSS, the governor intends to set a baseline for what the state pays in this county-administered program. Currently, counties vary greatly in the services they offer and the rates they pay for home health care workers. The governor wants to stabilize the state's investment in the program and counties have the prerogative to augment what the state pays. Loss of IHSS funding might mean an increase in regional center funding for the supports currently paid for by IHSS.

Regarding Medi-Cal, an integral part of the proposed system redesign would be to have all recipients participate in managed care plans, such as CalOptima, which administers Medi-Cal in Orange County.

Budget Still in the Early Stages

This is just the beginning of the process to arrive at a signed state budget by July 1. Discussion, debate and negotiations will abound among the governor, legislators and interest groups along with analysis by the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office and observations by political commentators. In the next issue of *Dialogue* I should be able to give you a more accurate portrayal of the state budget and how it may impact people with disabilities.

Consumer Advisory Team (CAT) Update

CAT Meetings are Productive and Fun

By Michael Bailey, Chairman

At the **November** meeting, the group talked about sheltered workshops



and transportation. Some consumers don't think workshops are good places for other consumers to work. We may form a committee to talk about workshop issues. Some of the issues we would talk about are getting higher pay for consumers and improving health and safety at the workplace. Lonny Keefover, RCOC's Adult Resource Group coordinator, will work with us.

The CAT group had a **Christmas party** at RCOC on December 15. About 30 consumers came. Instead of exchanging gifts, we brought canned food for the RCOC Wish Tree program. The Wish Tree program gives food and Christmas gifts to consumers who wouldn't get presents otherwise. We

played some fun games and ate good food at the party.

At the **January** meeting a person from the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) visited. She answered questions that members had about the ACCESS program and the big bus. We also talked more about workshop conditions with Lonny Keefover.

All consumers are welcome to come to Consumer Advisory Team meetings. They are held on the third Wednesday of the month. The meeting time is 10:00 a.m. to noon. The meeting place is usually the RCOC East/Central office at 801 Civic Center Drive, Santa Ana. Support staff are also welcome. Transportation is not provided by RCOC. Please call Betty Bath at

(714) 796-5263 ahead of time to let her know you will be there.

The Consumer Advisory Team (CAT) is a group of consumers that meets once a month. The group talks about things that are important to RCOC consumers, like advocacy and independence. The CAT chairman tells the RCOC board of directors about the group's concerns.



Having fun at the CAT holiday party are: (Top, left – right), Marianna Hatch, Holly Blaes, and Michelle Sieloff; (Middle) Kathy McCrystal, RCOC East Area Manager Rosalinda Lopez, and Virginia Rangel; and (Bottom) Molly Van Norman, RCOC Administrative Assistant Betty Bath, and Tom Deininger.

The Fuss at the Bus stop

Hello Safety Friends,



It's Cautious Kyle with another edition of Safety Stu's Corner. As you know, the GET SAFE™ team welcomes letters from our readers. Here is a letter sent in from someone like you...a safety friend.

Dear Safety Stu,

I have a question. Sometimes when I am sitting on the bench waiting for the bus to arrive in the morning, I see a man [sitting next to me]. He starts talking to me and he [asked] me if I had a boyfriend. I told him yes; then he says break [up] with him. Then he starts kissing me on the shoulder and he hugs me and I get scared because I don't know what to do. Then he told me to give [him] my telephone number and I just ignored him. Sometimes I don't like talking with strangers at all. Will you tell me please what to do?

Safety friends, you may have had a similar problem. **Remember these simple safety rules:**

1. Never talk to people that you don't know.
2. You are in charge of YOUR body. You do not need to allow ANYONE to touch it.
3. People who want to give you a kiss or a hug should be people you TRUST. People like your mom, dad, brothers, and sisters are all good examples of people you might trust. That does not mean you have to allow family members to kiss you. Remember, it takes time to build trust.
4. If someone is bothering you, get away from them. Go somewhere you can get help. You can even go into a busy restaurant or store. That means that if someone is bothering you — even if you are waiting for your bus — you should leave and go somewhere safe. You can always catch a later bus. Your safety is what's really important.
5. Getting help means telling a “safe person” what is going on. A safe person is someone that you trust and may be able to help you. Your mom and dad are a great start. You can also tell teachers, caregivers, counselors, or your Regional Center service coordinator, too. If you tell someone you trust and still no one is helping you, then you should KEEP TELLING PEOPLE until someone does help!

I hope this advice helps all our safety friends out there as well as the person who wrote the letter. If you have a safety question for Safety Stu and the Safety Team, write to us. Send your letter to: Safety Stu, c/o RCOC, P.O Box 22010, Santa Ana, CA, 92702. If we use your question in Safety Stu's Corner, we will send you a safety T-shirt, absolutely free.



Thanks for Staying Safe,
Cautious Kyle



Meet the Parents Who Staff the FRC

By Jacqui Kerze, FRC Supervisor

It has been a couple years since we introduced the parents of children with special needs that work at the Family Resource Center (FRC), so here's an update. The last issue of *Dialogue* announced that I have moved from my role as family support coordinator to supervisor of the FRC. I've been working at the Regional Center for seven years and have a 10-year-old son, Michael, who has Down syndrome and autism.



born and stayed in the hospital for 3½ months. She is doing well now and attends Orange Coast College.

Naomi Hall

Job facts: Seven years at the FRC

- Coordinates Parent Connection program
- Provides support and resources to parents and professionals



Community activities: Co-chairs the

Interagency Review Team and Family Support Services committees of the interagency group CRIBS

Personal: Has two sons: Aaron, 11, and Trevor, 13. Trevor has cerebral palsy and was diagnosed with Lesch-Nyhan syndrome at 11½ years of age. He is in 8th grade and doing well.

Our great team of parents who staff the FRC can offer assistance to other parents looking for information, resources or a listening ear.

Martha Gallegos

Job facts:

- Started at the FRC in 1994
- Provides outreach and parent support to Spanish-speaking and English-speaking families



Community activities: Conference presentations

- Facilitates Fiesta Familiar meetings
- Organizes annual Fiesta Educativa Orange County conference
- Trains Spanish-speaking child care providers through Project Access
- Coordinates annual Hispanic Liturgy and traditional Posadas Navideñas gathering for families of children with disabilities

Personal: The second of her four children, Cristina, was prematurely

Maria Pecina

Job facts: Six years at the FRC

- Provides parent-to-parent support, information and referrals to Spanish-speaking families



- Trains parent volunteers for Parent Connection program

Community activities: Organized support group Arcoiris for Spanish-speaking parents of children with Down syndrome

Personal: The youngest of her three children, Jennifer, 8, has Down syndrome. Maria is active in Jennifer's education and happy that she is included in a regular classroom.

Visit the Resource Center and Test Out 'Play Along With Me!'

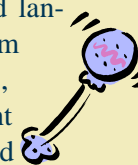
The Family Resource Center (FRC) is located adjacent to RCOC's Santa Ana office at 801 Civic Center Drive West and is open Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Please feel free to stop by anytime during those hours to talk to our staff and browse our many books, magazines and videotapes that cover a wide range of disability-related topics. You can also call us at (714) 558-5400.

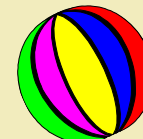
PLAY ALONG WITH ME!TM is an active learning system for babies and toddlers up to age 3 that uses one-on-one playtime to strengthen parent-child bonding, a key ingredient for successful early development.



Created with guidance from leading early childhood and language experts, the system incorporates songs, toys, videos, CDs and a parent guidebook to help you and your child have fun while boosting your baby's cognitive, motor, social and language skills. To learn more, log onto nurturebasics.com or call toll-free (866) 305-0222.



The price for the kit is \$169.95 plus sales tax and shipping. Comfort Connection Family Resource Center has a sample kit that parents can test by visiting the FRC.



Help! Foster Parents Needed

Do you know someone who would like to make a positive difference in the life of a child in need? Could that someone be you? Orange County Social Services Agency needs new foster parents for children with special needs that have been taken from their birth families because of neglect or abuse. Usually the placement is temporary – from one day to 18 months. Occasionally, the child involved may become eligible for adoption.

Foster parents can be married or single. They can own or rent their home. They receive funding for the physical needs of the child in their care.

Rosa Macias is an RCOC service coordinator who serves as a liaison to the Orange County Social Services Agency. When a child who is a Regional Center consumer must be

removed from his or her family home, Rosa is charged with finding a residential placement for that child. She said, “I try to work with kids and place them in foster homes rather than group homes.”

“The children with special needs that we have cared for have brought so much joy into our lives.”

Karen Templeton, foster parent

One of the foster parents that Rosa has worked with is Karen Templeton. Karen said, “The children with special needs that we have cared for have brought so much joy into our lives. I think that birth families whose children are Regional Center

clients would be a wonderful resource to foster or possibly adopt the special needs children in the county foster and adoption program. Those families already have the ability and the compassion to nurture and challenge these youth. The skills and abilities such parents have gained in acquiring services and finding resources for their own children could also greatly benefit foster children with disabilities.”

If you would like to learn more about this opportunity to provide temporary care and love to a child with a developmental disability, please contact Yazmin Leal at (714) 704-8704. You can also send an e-mail to her at yazmin.leal@ssa.ocgov.com or look at the foster parent recruitment Web site at www.oc4kids.com.

David Chapman: Eagle Scout

On September 12, 2004, 19-year-old David Chapman was officially conferred the rank held by only four percent of Boy Scouts when he had his Eagle Scout Court of Honor in Irvine.

David happens to have Down syndrome, but that never even slowed him down, according to his parents, Dave and Marty Chapman.

Dave said, “He decided early on that he wanted to be an Eagle Scout and he never wavered from that. He never changed his mind and said, ‘this is too hard’ or ‘I don’t want to do it.’ It was amazing to see the focus and consistency of desire to keep that goal.

“When you have a baby with a disability, everything caves in on you

and you think it’s just going to be hard – and it is. We had a lot of challenges early on. But there’s also a lot of goodness that comes out of it.

What David brought into the household was far more enriching than you would have expected. He has done so much for us.”

The requirements to become an Eagle Scout include earning at least 21 merit badges and leading a community service project. David’s Eagle project was to lead the rebuilding of horseshoe courts at Bommer Canyon and construction of two animal track sandboxes at Bommer Canyon and the Turtle Rock Nature Center. Through his perseverance and outstanding achievement,

David has shown that a person with a disability can be capable of doing what many people without a disability either aren’t able or willing to do.



At its meeting on November 4, 2004, the Regional Center of Orange County Board of Directors recognized David for his achievement. Pictured from left to right: RCOC Board Chairman Steve Sherman, Eagle Scout David Chapman and his parents, Marty and Dave.

New for 2005: Health Classes and Vision Exams

By Chanté White, CalOptima Liaison

CalOptima's Health Promotions and Disease Management Department has a new name. It's **Health Education, Disease and Outcomes**



Management. This department is dedicated to preventive care by offering a variety of classes such as Smoking Cessation, Breast Self-Examination, Diabetes Care, High Blood Pressure Control, Disease Nutrition Guidance, Weight Loss & more.

The heart health program is being offered in February 2005. The name of this quarterly program is "Treat

your Heart Well." A cardiologist and other health professionals will provide a presentation on preventive care, treatment options and various diseases. Did you know that hypertension (high blood pressure) is a form of heart disease? This, as well as many related topics, will be discussed.

Diabetes and Your Vision

When was the last time you had a retinal eye exam? ***An eye exam can help save your eyesight and improve it.*** If you have diabetes, regular vision exams by an eye doctor (ophthalmologist or optometrist) are very important. Diabetes that is not treated may cause blindness. If you take insulin, you will need to have an eye exam every year. If you do not

take insulin, you may only need an eye exam every two years. Talk with your doctor about how often you need an exam. For members enrolled in a health network, call your health network for a referral to a vision specialist.

A Course for People with Diabetes

CalOptima offers a program for our diabetic members called: "Diabetes Time – Diabetes and Sick Day Management." The next session will be held in March 2005. The program includes guest speakers, one-on-one counseling by registered dietitians, community resources, and a raffle for a fabulous prize. All programs are available in English, Spanish and Vietnamese.

Family Program Updates

Family Cost Participation Program

Articles in the Spring, Summer and Fall 2004 issues of *Dialogue* addressed the impending Family Cost Participation Program (FCPP). Last December, RCOC sent letters to 5,000 families affected by the parental co-pay program that went into effect January 1, 2005. The program requires that families meeting certain conditions share in the cost of respite, day care, and camping services that their children receive. The conditions requiring family cost participation are:

- √ The child is between ages 3 and 17
- √ The child lives at home

- √ The child is not Medi-Cal eligible
- √ The family's income exceeds 400 percent of the federal poverty level

If you have questions about the FCPP, please call your RCOC service coordinator.

Changes to Vouchered Services

In the summer of 2004 RCOC sent a letter to parent vendors and published an article in *Dialogue* telling parents about upcoming changes to the "Parent-Vendored Respite" program. The changes require stricter record-keeping by parents who get reimbursed for RCOC services provided to their children. The changes

went into effect July 1 because the state Legislature approved revisions to the California Code of Regulations proposed by the Department of Developmental Services.

In December 2004 RCOC sent another letter informing parent vendors of the need to complete the required paperwork or lose their "parent-vendor" status. Parents choosing not to comply with the new regulations were offered alternatives such as respite services provided by a vendored agency. If you have questions about parent-vendored services or the regulatory changes, please contact your RCOC service coordinator.

CalOptima List of Local Resources

To take care of our members, CalOptima works closely with local community organizations to find resources and support groups for our members. Below are just some of the local resources to which we refer our members. If you would like to know more about the resources in your community, call our Customer Service Department at (714) 246-8500 or Chanté White at (714) 796-5213. If we don't have the resource that you need, we'll help you find it.

AGENCY	DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES	PHONE NUMBER
CalOptima 1120 W. La Veta Ave Orange, CA 92868	Managed health care program for Medi-Cal beneficiaries in Orange County. See www.CalOptima.org	(714) 246-8500 (888) 587-8088 (714) 246-8523-TTY
PacificCare Behavioral Health Care	Provides mental health services, including outpatient services and psychiatric inpatient services for CalOptima members.	(800) 723-8641
Denti-Cal	Administers dental services for CalOptima members.	(800) 322-6384
Vision Service Plan (VSP)	Administers vision services for CalOptima members.	(800) 852-7600
Dayle McIntosh Center for the Disabled (DMC)	DMC acts as an ombudsman for the rights of individuals with disabilities. Provides referrals for employment, housing and other services.	(714) 621-3300
Regional Center of Orange County (RCOC)	Serves people with developmental disabilities.	(714) 796-5100
California Children Services (CCS)	Specialized medical care and rehabilitation for eligible children with complicated medical needs. Ages 0-21.	(714) 347-0300
Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP)	Volunteer supported program that provides assistance with Medicare problems and helps with private health insurance.	(714) 560-0424
In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS)	Provides assistance to eligible aged, blind, and disabled persons who are unable to remain safely in their own homes without assistance.	(714) 825-3000
Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA)	Primary transportation planning agency and transit provider. Provides door-to-door transportation for persons with a disability who cannot take scheduled buses.	(714) 636-7433
Legal Aid Society of Orange County	Provides general legal services to low-income Orange County residents.	(800) 834-5001
Multipurpose Senior Services Program (MSSP)	Provides case management services for elderly and disabled adults to avoid/delay placement in a nursing home.	(714) 566-3100
Long Term Care Ombudsman	Volunteer program providing assistance in resolving conflicts for members in a long term care facility.	(714) 479-0107
Medicare	A federal health insurance program for people 65 or older; some people with disabilities under age 65; people with End Stage Renal Disease.	(800) MEDICARE (800) 633-4227 (877) 486-2048 - TTY

Twins (from page 1)

Both boys continued to receive assistance with speech, while Steven also needed occupational therapy. When they entered first grade, the boys still had an Individual Education Program (special education paperwork), but were placed in a regular education class. They exited special education altogether by third grade.

Today they are 14 years old, doing well, and their mom, Pat, describes them as average students. Thomas loves skateboarding and PlayStation®2. Steven, the one who was deprived of nutrients in the womb, still has some physical strength limitations, but he makes up for those with his indomitable spirit. He loves anything to do with the military and dreams of joining the Navy someday.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this story is that the mom of the twins, Pat Glancy, is now manager of RCOC's Intake work group, and she supervises the service coordinator, Diana Happ, who made that initial visit to her home. At an RCOC staff meeting in 2004, Pat read her journal entry when she presented Diana with an award for 25 years of service to the agency and to families. At that meeting, Pat added this comment, "Diana – you never know when a moment and a few sincere words can have an impact on a life. Thank you for the positive impact that I know you have had on so many lives."

Pat also has had a positive impact on families, according to Cinda Bottorf, director of the Developmental Assessment Resource Group at RCOC. She said, "During resource group meetings, when specialists and service coordinators are poring over medical records and screening data, Pat is the voice that rings true and asks, 'So, how are Mom and Dad doing? How can we help them to help their baby?' That perspective is

Below: Steven's adoration of his big sister is apparent in this picture as he, sister Kaitlin and Thomas had fun goofing around.



what Early Start services are all about, and she keeps us there."

Pat started with RCOC 10 years ago as a service coordinator. Before her promotion to Intake manager three years ago, she gained experience as an Intake service coordinator in RCOC's South Area and then as a training and standards coordinator in the North Area office. She said, "My experience [with the twins] helped me help others when I started working at RCOC." Through the years, she has seen changes in the way services are delivered, particularly in the Early Start area.

"I think things have definitely improved," she said. "We're sharper, better at assessing kids. We've raised the standard and are providing a more comprehensive program for children than we did 10 years ago."

About three years ago, in response to concerns expressed by parents of children in Early Start, the agency formed the Developmental Assess-

ment Resource Group and staffed it with early childhood specialists. The members of the group meet with families and their children and are able to provide more personalized assessments, recommendations and treatment, which also helps streamline the Intake process. Pat's ideas and input were instrumental in the creation of that group. For such contributions to improving services and for her compassion for families, Pat received the Spotlight Award for RCOC Achievement in 2002.

Pat's assessment of the situation was typically modest, "All this when what I really wanted to do was work part time!"

Janis White, RCOC's chief operating officer, offered a little more insight. She said, "Pat comes from such a broad perspective, combining her experience as a parent of children with special needs with her professional background. She's got an upbeat personality. No matter what happens, she can handle it. She's a cheerleader for her staff. She's a great problem solver. I know with Pat at the helm, everything gets done."



Pat (second from right) said her husband, Bill (left), has always been supportive of her career choices. They and their children (Steven, left, Thomas, right, and 17-year-old Kaitlin) lead busy but fulfilling lives, always managing to carve out family time.

Important Things to Know...

'Technology and Persons with Disabilities,' 20th annual international conference sponsored by the



Center on Disabilities, California State University, Northridge (CSUN), will take

place March 14-19, 2005 at the Hilton Los Angeles Airport and Los Angeles Airport Marriott Hotels in Los Angeles. Complimentary exhibit hall passes good for March 17-19 are available from your RCOC service coordinator. To attend speaker sessions or other conference activities, you must register for the conference and pay the fees. For more information, call CSUN's Center on Disabilities office at (818) 677-2578, or visit the Center's Web site at www.scun.edu/cod.

Pathways to Adventure... An Outdoor Experience is hosting another event for families of RCOC consumers on Saturday, April 2 from



9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Oak Canyon Lake in Orange. Pathways to Adventure is a one-day, multi-station tour that educates families about camping and fishing. Bring your family out for a day of fun and hands-on learning as the Pathways instructors teach you the skills necessary to enjoy camping, backpacking, hiking, and fishing at educational stations such as How to Set Up a Family Camp, The 10 Essentials of Hiking, Knot Tying, and Casting 101. Also, everyone will have a chance to catch a fish! Lunch is included along with other fun

activities for the kids, including Japanese fish painting, the worm bin, and a Pathways coloring station. The Pathways to Adventure store will offer some camping equipment and souvenirs for sale. All participants are requested to pre-register with Pathways to Adventure at (714) 538-8170 by March 25. Visit www.pathwaystoadventure.org for more information and directions to the lake.

Parents ... RCOC offers FREE Behavior Management Workshops for parents in four-session modules 10 months of the year. The focus is on helping parents of children with developmental disabilities change their own behavior as well as their children's using the principles of positive behavior management. The workshops are taught by qualified behavior management professionals. Workshops are offered in Spanish and Vietnamese as well as English. Times and locations vary. For the schedule and locations, please call your child's RCOC service coordinator or Thelma Day, behavior management workshop liaison, at (714) 796-5223.

Free Income Tax Filing Assistance ... The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) offers free tax assistance through Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE). Volunteers prepare federal and state income tax returns for low income, senior, physically challenged, and non-English-speaking taxpayers. RCOC has a list of the sites where this service is available, so you can call your service coordinator to find

the location nearest you. You can also call IRS Customer Service at (800) 829-1040 to ask for the VITA or TCE site near you.

Note: Consumers or their families may be eligible for an Earned Income Tax Credit as well as other tax credits related to having a disability or caring for a person with a disability. VITA and TCE volunteers are trained to assist families with claiming Earned Income Credit. For more information and to download publications such as Publication 907, "Tax Highlights for Persons with Disabilities," log onto the IRS Web site at www.irs.gov.

Recall notice ... Gillette and the Food and Drug Administration notified healthcare professionals and consumers of a recall of Oral-B CrossAction Power and PowerMAX toothbrushes and refills. Instances have occurred where the brush head became loose in the mouth during the assisted brushing of teeth of people with special needs, such as cerebral palsy or autism. During brushing, the loose brush head was caught in the throat or swallowed. **Gillette recommended that people stop using these products to assist in brushing the teeth of people with special needs.** If you have one of the affected toothbrushes, you can call Gillette at 1-800-496-6557 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. (EST) Monday through Friday to find out how to obtain a free Oral-B Advance Power 400 to replace it. Please note that this is not the Sonicare electric toothbrush that RCOC made available to consumers a few years ago.



Dialogue is published four times per year by the Regional Center of Orange County for people with developmental disabilities, their families, service providers, and members of the community.

Dialogue can be read online at RCOC's Web site: www.rcocdd.com.

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24-hour phone: (714) 889-7200

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2004-2005 Board Meetings

Mar. 3 • May 5

Meetings start at 6:00 p.m. and are held in the Regional Center Board Room at 801 Civic Center Drive West, Santa Ana. The public is welcome.

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Dialogue Newsletter

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